

VZCZCXRO2995
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0647 1321517
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 121517Z MAY 06
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7133
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0642
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0481
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/USDAO ABUJA NI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 000647

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE FOR S/CT MTHOMPSON AND JWEBSTER
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII,
DS/DSS/ITA, CA/EX

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: AMCIT MURDER & WARRI CAR BOMB SUGGEST DANGEROUS
NEW TRENDS

REF: A. LAGOS 627

[1](#)B. TD-314/31307-06

Classified By: Consul General Brian Browne for reasons 1.4 (D and E).

[1](#)1. (C) The apparently targeted killing of AmCit oil service company worker Ricky Wiginton on May 10 is the latest incident of violence in the volatile Niger Delta region (reftel A). Nigerian security sources say this type of willful homicidal attack on an expatriate, particularly an American, is extremely rare in Nigeria, and we concur with this assessment. Although the motive for the killing is unclear, at this point what seems clear is that homicide was the objective. This is a distant departure from the past. Sadly, expatriates have been killed before but usually as an accidental consequence of the commission of a lesser crime.

[1](#)2. (C) The car bomb that exploded in Warri, Delta State, on April 30 was the second car bomb in the Niger Delta in less than two weeks. MEND sent conflicting signals on this. One MEND statement claimed responsibility while another disavowed involvement. The MEND statement taking credit for the bombing said the Warri bomb, which damaged five empty fuel tanker trucks, consisted of 30kg (66 lbs) of dynamite concealed in a Mercedes Benz sedan and detonated with a mobile phone. This was the same method claimed in the Port Harcourt explosion eleven days before. See reftel B for more information on the Warri bombing.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Crime and violence are too common in the Niger Delta. The murder of AmCit Ricky Wiginton is particularly disconcerting. We hope it is a tragic anomaly that will not bear repetition. However, we are concerned it may augur further attacks against expatriate oil workers. The recent hostage-takings and attacks against oil facilities have shown the inadequacy of the GON security apparatus in the Delta. These incidents also have removed the aura of protection from expatriate workers, showing them to be susceptible to harm and attack while the perpetrators have heretofore gone unpunished. We cannot claim to know the true

reason for the murder nor has any group taken responsibility.

But we will be monitoring closely to see if this represents something more than an isolated tragedy. Already it has affected the operation of Baker Hughes. Not taking any chances, Baker Hughes has temporarily withdrawn all expatriate workers from Port Harcourt.

14. (C) Comment continued: The recent car bombings should be seen in a similar light as they could represent a significant escalation in tension in the Delta. Conflicting MEND statements could be attributed to a split in MEND or someone could be using MEND's name to make it appear MEND is ubiquitous and has a hand in every disruptive event in the Delta. This could cut both ways. The random, indiscriminate nature of the car bombings could diminish public support for MEND which is fairly high in the Delta right now. Conversely, attributing almost every act to MEND could be calculated to make it look powerful, thus drawing more votaries. Whether the perpetrators are MEND, other militants, disgruntled employees, or other individuals or groups yet to be identified, any such attacks in urban areas of the Niger Delta show that actors in the Niger Delta are increasingly more willing to resort to violence as the easy answer to a greater number of problems. End comment.
BROWNE